

# Aftermath of the Hawaiian Exit Referendum

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# **Introduction**

In the event that Hawai'i carries out an exit referendum and successfully gains legal independence from the United States of America (henceforth referred to as the U.S.), there are several immediate logical steps that would have to be taken to establish the new nation of Hawai'i. The general philosophy during this establishment process would be to keep as many of the state mechanics unchanged, so as to save on expenses and time — at least during the initial stages of nation-building. The primary focuses during this time would be the formation of the new government and international recognition as a country, dealing with the U.S. business and military assets still present in Hawai'i, and developing a sustainable and independent economy.

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## **First Steps**

As soon as the result of the Hawaiian referendum is confirmed and independence declared, the immediate priorities would be to establish a form of government and define who is allowed to vote for that government. Additionally, to be a full-fledged nation Hawai'i would need an official country name, capital, language, and flag.

## **National Capital**

Before attempting to gain recognition as a new independent nation, Hawai'i would first need to establish a national form of government. In selecting an official

capital, the most practical choice would be Honolulu. Part of Honolulu County — which has the largest population in Hawai‘i at 992,600 (July 2016 est.)<sup>1</sup> — the city of Honolulu is the current state capital and as such already has established government offices and buildings, as well as developed transportation and communication infrastructure. Whether Honolulu remains the capital beyond Hawai‘i’s first few years as a country is up for debate, but from the outset it is the logical place for Hawai‘i’s new government to be based out of.

## **Form of Government**

The new form of the Hawaiian government would essentially be a republic despite any arguments for a monarchy. The reason for this is that after a century of voting rights under the U.S. Constitution, the general public has become accustomed to having a say in how Hawai‘i is managed — even though Hawai‘i (as a U.S. state) statistically has the lowest voter turnout nationwide.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, having their country back for the first time in over a century would mean that most — if not all — Hawaiians would want a direct say in how their new country should be established and run. Realistically this means that the Hawaiian government would be established with democratically elected leaders, a national constitution, and a bill of rights. On a side note: Particularly after the conclusion of WWII, many countries that gained independence from imperial powers fell under the rule of military dictators supported

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<sup>1</sup> "QuickFacts: Honolulu County, Hawaii." *Census.gov*. United States Census Bureau, 1 July 2016.

<sup>2</sup> "States With The Highest (And Lowest) Voter Turnout." *HuffPost.com*. Huffington Post, 28 Oct. 2016.

by their personal militaries.<sup>3</sup> Should Hawai'i gain independence, the rise of a military dictatorship government would likely not be an issue as Hawai'i has no standing army of its own — nor any ambitious military leaders to seize power. It is safe to assume that any form of government established in an independent Hawai'i would be civilian-run and civilian-elected.

It is possible for the new nation of Hawai'i to have a monarchy form of government, but only to the degree that the United Kingdom has a monarchy. The Hawaiian monarch would be expected to maintain the best interests of the Native Hawaiian people and would perform all significant traditional ceremonies and similar activities in the new government, serving more of a symbolic leader rather than an actual acting leader. Day-to-day operations would still be handled by the elected Hawaiian parliament,<sup>4</sup> though proposed bills would require the approval from the Hawaiian monarch before being made into law.<sup>5</sup> Again, this form of government would be very similar in style and function to the United Kingdom's parliamentary constitutional monarchy government.<sup>6</sup>

The process of finding a Hawaiian monarch would be a long and highly debated process, particularly regarding which standards should be used in selecting a monarch. What kind of lineage should the monarch have? What if no royal descendant is alive and/or able? How much of a majority vote would this monarchical candidate be required to obtain before being instated? Whatever the case may be, what is absolutely

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<sup>3</sup> "Decolonization of Asia and Africa, 1945-1960." *History.state.gov*. Office of the Historian, n.d.

<sup>4</sup> "Parliament and the Government." *Parliament.uk*. United Kingdom Parliament, n.d.

<sup>5</sup> "How Government Works." *Gov.uk*. Government Digital Service, n.d.

<sup>6</sup> "The World Factbook: United Kingdom." *CIA.gov*. Central Intelligence Agency, 12 Jan. 2017.

clear is that no single individual would be able or allowed to claim the throne without the people's approval.

## Citizenship

This brings us to an important decision that must be defined early on: What constitutes a citizen of Hawai'i? One way to define a Hawaiian citizen is any individual born on Hawaiian soil. If this is the case, a date of effect must be selected in regards to the establishment of Hawai'i as a country: Does this qualification act retroactively, as in anyone in the past who was born on Hawaiian soil can claim citizenship? Or does it only take into effect from now on, with the establishment of the Hawaiian government? Another qualification for citizenship may be Native Hawaiian blood. A 2013 census report indicated that the Native Hawaiian population was around 298,000 (including those of more than one race) in Hawai'i and more than 560,000 when including those on the U.S. mainland.<sup>7</sup> Should the Hawaiian government desire a larger national population of citizens, it would utilize a combination of citizenship qualifications such as some of the aforementioned like being born on Hawaiian soil, having a percentage of native blood, and perhaps successfully passing a citizenship test to become naturalized citizens — methods similar to how the U.S. conducts its own citizenship requirements.<sup>8</sup> The Hawaiian government could even adapt some of the legal definitions created by third-party Hawaiian self-determination organizations like Na'i Aupuni.<sup>9</sup> Further down

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<sup>7</sup> Goo, Sara K. "After 200 Years, Native Hawaiians Make a Comeback." *Pew Research Center*. Pew Charitable Trusts, 6 Apr. 2015.

<sup>8</sup> "U.S. Citizenship." *USCIS.gov*. United States Department of Homeland Security, 17 Jan. 2013.

<sup>9</sup> "Key Documents." *Naiaupuni.org*. Na'i Aupuni, n.d.

the road, the nation of Hawai'i would be inclined to refine what constitutes a citizen as its tax and benefits systems are established. (This will be discussed again in the subsection entitled "U.S. Citizenship".)

### **Country Name, Language, Flag**

There are a few additional matters that must be addressed before a country can present itself to the world: the official country name, language, and flag. The official country name would reflect whatever decision is made in regards to the selected form of government (discussed in subsection "Form of Government"), be it the Republic of Hawai'i, the Kingdom of Hawai'i, etcetera. The choice of official language should be easy as the U.S. state of Hawai'i currently recognizes English and Hawaiian as its two official languages (Hawai'i is the *only* state to have two).<sup>10</sup> These language choices would undoubtedly carry over to the country of Hawai'i. As for the choice of the official Hawaiian flag, a lot of time and debate would go into this decision alone — the debate over the design would take into consideration attributes of symbolism and historical significance and the like,<sup>11</sup> but in the meantime, for the sake of efficiency the new government would go with a temporary preexisting flag design such as the Hawai'i state flag, while leaving the final decision for later. A national flag may be important, but there would be other more pressing matters that Hawai'i would need to attend to first.

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<sup>10</sup> "The World Factbook: United States." *CIA.gov*. Central Intelligence Agency, 12 Jan. 2017.

<sup>11</sup> "The Hawaiian National Flag and Royal Flag." *Hawaiian Kingdom Blog*. WordPress, 29 June 2013.

## **Land Ownership**

Another example of an important issue that would have to be addressed is the issue of land ownership. This issue would undoubtedly be a major point of social petition and unrest, with Hawaiian citizens demanding the newly established government to recognize their claims to the 'aina. As important and inescapable as this topic may be, this issue would have to be dealt with later when the country has secured its position in the international arena. In the meantime, the government may choose as a temporary solution to create and assign a department to begin addressing and settling land claims until the main government body is able to give the focus and attention that this issue would require.

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## **International Recognition**

All the aforementioned objectives in the previous section are directed to allow for the new country of Hawai'i to be recognized abroad. Specifically, for Hawai'i to become an internationally legitimate country it would need to gain recognition primarily from the United States and the United Nations. Throughout this process, Hawai'i needs to assert itself as a capable, independent nation that is no longer totally reliant on the U.S. Otherwise, foreign countries may be inclined exploit the fledgling nation of Hawai'i in its early stages, seeking special trading or military privileges in return for support in the international arena. Without a national gold reserve to back up its currency, Hawai'i

would be in need of a way to back up the guarantee of its economy, or else other nations would be hesitant to provide loans or aid of any sort to Hawai'i. Early on in its establishment, Hawai'i needs to present itself as capable enough to truly be a country on its own, out from under the wing of the U.S.

## **Recognition by the United States of America**

Gaining recognition from the U.S. is relatively straightforward: The recognition of a new country comes directly from the U.S. President.<sup>12</sup> What this entails is that Hawai'i would need to be on good terms with the U.S. and likely have to agree to several conditions presented by the U.S. before the President would be willing to recognize Hawai'i (specific demands covered later in the section entitled "Negotiations with the United States"). Is U.S. recognition necessary? Absolutely. Unless the U.S. is no longer the ruling global military and economic superpower when Hawai'i gains independence, Hawai'i will need to find a way to gain recognition from the U.S. by some means as Hawai'i would still need the U.S. as a trade and military partner.

## **Recognition by the United Nations**

Gaining recognition from the United Nations (UN) is also relatively straightforward, but success may be more complicated to obtain as more countries are involved. While the UN itself not a state or government, acquiring membership into the organization is a significant step in gaining recognition from other countries. UN

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<sup>12</sup> Keating, Joshua. "How to Start Your Own Country in Four Easy Steps." *ForeignPolicy.com*. Foreign Policy Group, 26 Feb. 2008.



membership is open “to all peace-loving States that accept the obligations contained in the United Nations Charter and, in the judgment of the Organization, are able to carry out these obligations.”<sup>13</sup> The UN website lists the process by which a new country seeking membership must take, quoted below:

1. The State submits an application to the Secretary-General and a letter formally stating that it accepts the obligations under the Charter.
2. The Security Council considers the application. Any recommendation for admission must receive the affirmative votes of 9 of the 15 members of the Council, provided that none of its five permanent members — China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America — have voted against the application.
3. If the Council recommends admission, the recommendation is presented to the General Assembly for consideration. A two-thirds majority vote is necessary in the Assembly for admission of a new State.
4. Membership becomes effective the date the resolution for admission is adopted.

Essentially, in order to gain UN recognition Hawai‘i would need to submit an official application, gain a 9 of 15 vote from the Security Council (with none of the five permanent members dissenting), and receive a two-third majority vote from the General Assembly. Note also that the U.S. is one of the five permanent members, further emphasizing the need for an independent Hawai‘i to gain recognition and be on good terms with the U.S. Gaining recognition from the UN is not as essential as U.S. recognition, but in the long run Hawai‘i will need the benefits that come with UN membership.

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<sup>13</sup> "About UN Membership." *UN.org*. United Nations, n.d.

# **Negotiations with the United States**

It cannot be emphasized enough the importance of Hawaiian diplomatic relations with the U.S. Try as Hawai'i might it will never be able to avoid having to deal with the U.S. in some manner or form. After successfully (and peacefully) gaining independence from the U.S., several decisions would have to be made regarding all of the U.S. assets still in Hawai'i. For example, most businesses in Hawai'i are U.S. owned and operated. With Hawaiian independence, these businesses would be on foreign soil and would have to decide whether to remain in Hawai'i or pull out — depending on Hawaiian international business policy. Ultimately, all negotiations would be in the effort of gaining U.S. recognition of Hawai'i as a country, as well as the support from the U.S. in Hawai'i acquiring UN membership.

## **U.S. Citizenship**

The issue of dual citizenship is another topic that would also need to be addressed early on. After independence, people born on Hawaiian soil would no longer be automatic American citizens, but what about those born before Hawaiian independence? It is likely that in this case the U.S. would allow such individuals to keep their U.S. citizenship, but would only allow dual Hawaiian and U.S. citizenship if Hawai'i cooperates with U.S. negotiations. For Hawai'i's part, dual citizenship would be necessary to maintain a decent sized population as relatively few individuals would be inclined to accept only Hawaiian citizenship and give up their U.S. citizenship. This is

simply because having U.S. citizenship guarantees more benefits than Hawaiian citizenship such as Social Security and welfare programs, travelling with a U.S. passport, U.S. constitutional civil rights, federal aid for education, etcetera.<sup>14</sup> Until Hawai'i establishes similar social benefits linked to citizenship, many families living in Hawai'i would choose to instead have their children born on the U.S. mainland so that their kids would be U.S. citizens.

## **U.S. Military**

There is actually relatively little that the U.S. would “withdraw” from Hawai'i: U.S. businesses would likely stay if given certain considerations; U.S. citizens would stay if allowed the same privileges they enjoyed before Hawaiian independence; but one U.S. entity that would absolutely remain whether Hawai'i wanted it or not is of course, the U.S. military. The U.S. has spent millions in the establishment of its military installations in Hawai'i, particularly Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam (JBPHH) — one of only 12 joint bases that the U.S. operates nationwide.<sup>15</sup> Considering its investment — and Pearl Harbor's strategic placement in controlling the Pacific — the U.S. will under no circumstances give up JBPHH. At the same time, it would actually be in the best interest of Hawai'i to allow for the U.S. to maintain its installations (at the very least keep JBPHH) as hosting the U.S. military would serve as a definite safeguard against advances from other foreign countries such as China.

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<sup>14</sup> "U.S. Naturalization Benefits and Responsibilities." *Immihelp.com*. Immihelp, n.d.

<sup>15</sup> "Twelve DoD Installations Reach Full Operational Capability in Support of the Joint Basing Program." *Acquisition Technology & Logistics*. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Energy, Installations, and Environment, n.d.

Allowing the U.S. military to stay would aid in friendly relations with the U.S., ideally helping in gaining Hawai'i international recognition as a country. Furthermore, allowing the U.S. military to stay would also give Hawai'i a steady source of revenue as the U.S. would be paying rent to maintain its bases in Hawai'i. The U.S. government already pay billions of dollars to foreign countries to maintain all of its overseas bases: Germany alone receives \$4 billion annually from the U.S. military bases it hosts.<sup>16</sup> The U.S. would undoubtedly negotiate with Hawai'i for a lower rate, but Hawai'i is still likely to be compensated handsomely for the use of Pearl Harbor.

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## **Hawaiian Economy**

Financial stability is essential for any country that wishes to be respected in the international arena. No longer receiving U.S. government funding and aid, Hawai'i would need to establish its own industries to sustain its newly independent economy if it hopes to be recognized as a country and gain membership into the UN. Lacking its own national gold reserves, Hawai'i would continue to use the U.S. dollar as its national currency (other independent countries that do the same include Ecuador, El Salvador, and Zimbabwe).<sup>17</sup> In the following subsections are a couple possibilities on how Hawai'i might leverage its current geographical and technological advantages to solidify its economy.

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<sup>16</sup> "Report: US Paying Billions More For Military Bases Overseas Despite Troop Reductions." *CBS Washington*. CBS Broadcasting Inc., 17 Apr. 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Adkins, Troy. "Countries That Use The U.S. Dollar." *Investopedia*. Investopedia, LLC, 9 Apr. 2015.

## International Trade

My family used to live in the Asian country of Singapore — a small island state just off the tip of the Malaysian peninsula and in close proximity to the Indonesian island of Sumatra. Singapore has an area of 697 km<sup>2</sup> (~269 mi<sup>2</sup>) — less than half the size of Oahu — yet supports a population of around 5.8 million (July 2016 est.). Despite its size, Singapore has one of the strongest economies in the world, having the 5<sup>th</sup> highest GDP per capita (U.S. ranked at #18).<sup>18</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook has this to say of Singapore's economy:

"Singapore has a highly developed and successful free-market economy. It enjoys a remarkably open and corruption-free environment, stable prices, and a per capita GDP higher than that of most developed countries. Unemployment is very low. The economy depends heavily on exports, particularly of consumer electronics, information technology products, medical and optical devices, pharmaceuticals, and on its vibrant transportation, business, and financial services sectors."

The reason I bring Singapore up is because Hawai'i could very well accomplish a similar feat as a free-trade powerhouse. Similar to Singapore, while Hawai'i is unable to base its economy on its natural resources it does have a geographic location that situates Hawai'i to potentially control most shipping routes between Asia and the United States. This would be a tremendous achievement for the Hawaiian economy and would help offset Hawai'i's high need for imports.

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<sup>18</sup> "The World Factbook: Singapore." *CIA.gov*. Central Intelligence Agency, 12 Jan. 2017.

## Computer Industry

The following concept can actually be applied to today's Hawai'i without the need for the independence scenario. Few have recognized this, but Hawai'i is actually set to be a powerful computer industry hub in the Pacific. It is geographically close to both Asia and the Americas which allows for faster network connections and communication. Hawai'i also has good social ties with Asia due to the large Asian population in Hawai'i — this allows for easier cooperation and communication between technology research groups based in Hawai'i and Asia. As an aside, Hawai'i is already considered an essential hub for diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Asia and is projected to become more important in the near future.<sup>19</sup>

The University of Hawai'i at Manoa — Hawai'i's most prominent public institute of higher education and the state's largest research enterprise<sup>20</sup> — has a strong and growing computer science program when ranked with programs nationwide. The National Security Agency and the Department of Defense designated UH Manoa a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense Research (CAE-R) for its achievements in cybersecurity research and development (other members include Princeton, Dartmouth, Carnegie Mellon, Boston University, Purdue, and Georgia Institute of Technology).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Catania, Sara. "Can Hawaii Be America's Bridge to Asia — and the World?". *ZocaloPublicSquare.org*. Zocalo Public Square, 8 Oct. 2016.

<sup>20</sup> "Hawai'i Innovation Initiative: About." *University of Hawai'i System*. Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation, n.d.

<sup>21</sup> UH News Staff. "UH Manoa Recognized for Excellence in Cybersecurity Research." *University of Hawai'i News*. University of Hawai'i System News, 4 May 2015.

UH Manoa's on-campus Laboratory for Advanced Visualization and Applications (LAVA, located in Keller 105) currently houses the world's highest definition virtual reality environment, designed and constructed by UH students and faculty.<sup>22</sup> My Computer Science professor Dr. Jason Leigh spearheaded the project, and I actually had the privilege of an early tour of the facility before it was officially revealed to the public. The technological concepts they are working on there are astounding, and Dr. Leigh informed me in an interview that they have even larger ideas planned. One of his next projects is another hybrid reality visualization device that will help analyze Hawai'i freshwater supply, usage, and distribution. All of this he told me is in the effort to break the stereotype that Hawai'i is not just a nice vacation spot, but is also a rising hub of innovation.

Most impressive of all, did you know that the original basis for networks — the ability for the internet to be wireless — was invented at the University of Hawai'i? The pioneer system was called ALOHAnet and was designed to allow easier communication between the Hawaiian islands by connecting computers using radio waves.<sup>23</sup> Today the presence of this system are everywhere — being found in Wi-Fi®, local area networks (LAN), ethernet, cable TV, cellular phone service — literally everywhere.

Considering all the above, Hawai'i is more than capable of establishing itself as a computer powerhouse in the Pacific. A computer industry would not be reliant on raw natural resources or on the frequency of visiting tourists. Instead, Hawai'i could depend

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<sup>22</sup> Essoyan, Susan. "UH Students Turn Complex Data into 3-D Imagery." *StarAdvertiser.com*. Honolulu Star-Advertiser, 26 Nov. 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Hennick, Calvin. "How ALOHAnet Helped Hawaii Make Waves in Networking and IT Innovation." *StateTech*. CDW LLC, 30 June 2016.

on a stable and growing economy that would also greatly aid its reputation in the international arena.

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## Conclusion

If Hawai'i is going to declare independence it needs to be ready to follow up quickly in establishing itself as a country, gaining U.S. and international recognition, and developing an economy. Even after achieving this there would still be much to do such as creating a new constitution, establishing a tax collection system, raising up a military, publishing a new curriculum for schools, setting up Hawaiian phone, internet, and TV service, new labor unions, and just about anything else that was formally included with U.S. statehood. Should Hawai'i succeed in all this, it would have the honor and achievement of being the newest country in the world, and be the very first state in history to successfully separate from the United States of America.

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